

SRC 22

Interviewee: Ed Peeples

Interviewer: Brian Ward

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W:Florida Oral History Program, the Southern Regional Council Project, on March 1, 2003, in Richmond, Virginia, and interview with Edward H. Peeples. Ed, thanks very much for sparing some time to talk to me.

P: Delighted.

W: Ed, what I would like to do to begin with is just ask you to fill in some background information for us. Give us a little bit of a biographical sketch of yourself, and tell us briefly how you got to come to Richmond, and then we will pick up the Virginia Council on Human Relations and your activism here.

P: The action in me coming to Richmond was because I was born a few blocks from here. My father had moved back from South Carolina and had gotten married. My mother and he came here to take a job in the grocery business, with a grocery chain which some of his relatives owned. That was 1935 I was born, and I was educated in public schools here and also went to college here at what is now Virginia Commonwealth University. It was called the Richmond Professional Institute at the time.

W: What was your major?

P: At first, I was just going to go to technical school and be a draftsman. Once I got here, I was offered the opportunity to play basketball for a small scholarship, and so I had to find a major. They told me that athletes always majored in phys[ical] ed [ucation], so I have a phys ed degree. But that introduced me to sociology and psychology and health education and history and a host of other good things. By the time I graduated, I had become something of a campus leader and a successful athlete. The school was in a transitional stage. It was growing, and the need for higher education was becoming more and more apparent to Virginians. RPI, as we called it in that day, was considered a second-rate kind of place. It was a division of the College of William and Mary and cooperated in engineering with Virginia Tech at the time, as was present-day Old Dominion University, [which] was also a division [of William and Mary]. I was introduced to a variety of thoughtful professors. I referred to them as educational missionaries.

W: Prior to actually getting to the university level, as you were being educated in the public schools here, did the fact that you were in a segregated system really mean anything to you?

P: No. I did not recognize there was anything odd about segregation. We were quite

aware of what the rules were. I found people who were rather mean-spirited about segregation around here, and they tried to intimidate people who practiced segregation in a lesser way. I recall having some mixed feelings about mistreating blacks, but it didn't penetrate very much because I never met anybody who was a critic of segregation or ever said anything about race unless it was white supremacy or segregation.

W: This would be true in your own family, as well?

P: Oh, yes. Some were militant and very ugly. Now, I had a Florida family, as well, and they were totally rural. Both families were rural. One had pretenses to being aristocracy, in South Carolina. The other one had no pretenses at all. They were from rural central Florida. They were out-and-out racists. But I had no notion. But by going to this college and meeting the woman we called Dr. Alice, a sociologist – she had been part of that tradition at UNC, the southern studies which was named for the sociologist of....

W: Howard Odum?

P: Howard Odum. She had been a student of his, and she had come back to do her missionary work with us working-class kids. I was raised as if I was working class. It was only later discovered that I had a long history of Virginia and learned that I could have qualified as the first families of Virginia and South Carolina, but I haven't bothered.

W: What was Dr. Alice's surname?

P: Alice Davis was her name. There was another Davis on campus who was a progressive economist, and there was a Russian woman who had escaped the Russian Revolution. She was on the wrong side of the leftist spectrum and had to escape with her life. She and Dr. Alice could be seen everywhere together, and they had immense influence on returning Korean veterans and a whole rapid change from rural to urban, from agriculture to industry, from a variety of needs that became more apparent in Virginia. I was just on the front end of that.

W: During the mid 1950s, of course, the rate of change in African-American civil rights struggle increases in pace, certainly with the *Brown* decision and then the second *Brown* decision, and then obviously there is a special reaction to that in Virginia. How much of those sorts of issues were important to you at that time?

P: Well, we knew nothing of it. The papers did not cover it very much, and I was obsessed with basketball and learning how to be with girls. But these teachers, a handful of them, attempted to bring it alive in our classes. Dr. Alice is distinctively one of those. But by 1955, I did feel very uneasy about segregation, and I began

to test, in kind of primitive ways, the limits of it. I have written some vignettes about that have already been published in a book called *Race Traitor*. It represents some of the accounts of those early days and described a bit of what I experienced back then, even as a child.

W: What sort of tentative testings of the boundaries of Jim Crow were you engaged in in the mid 1950s?

P: Mostly on campus. Also, I worked as a coach. A phys ed major always had an opportunity to be offered coaching jobs with younger kids, and I worked for the recreation department, as one example. Of course, I was assigned this white itty-bitty league football team. It was all white at what we call Fonticello Park. It was actually the neighborhood where I grew up. I was coaching them, and the little black kids of the same age would come to the park and sit on the sidelines and watch. The park was reserved for whites. This was south of the river.

W: What was the name of the park, again?

P: Fonticello, sort of like Monticello with some of the same attendant attitudes. I saw the sort of longing in their eyes, and it stirred me. So, when my supervisor would leave, they would leave you alone often, and you would be out there on the field in the wintertime by yourself, I would say, "Hey, boys, come on over," and we organized the black team and a white team and we had them play each other. The little black kids, it created such pride [for them]. Then when the supervisor would drive up in the city car, I would have them race over to the side, and they would sit down over there as observers. Then he would pull off. This was every afternoon, five days a week, I think it was. It was about 1955 or 1956 in the wintertime, something like that. So, we tricked the city recreation department by having, I would not call it an integrated league, but we had interracial competition, and the black kids got such joy out of it. The white kids, because this so-called adult white, twenty-year-old, said it was okay, then maybe it is okay, and they enjoyed it. It showed a great potential for changing kids if you would offer them.

Another episode, if you would like to hear it, occurred not too far from this incident, in which a team from the college for the deaf in Washington, D. C. [Gallaudet University] – the name of it slips my mind – they were all white, but we played them in basketball. This was basketball season. My job for my scholarship was to be a host to visiting teams. I went down to the cafeteria to take them through the line for the evening meal before the game. They were all white, but they had a black bus driver. The black bus driver eventually was denied the right to eat there, although these white basketball players, these rather tall deaf young men were allowed to eat. This is accounted in one of my vignettes. It enraged me, and I found some brand new disgust, and I was becoming more and more in

touch with how I was angered by the lies that had been told to me by white adults in my early life. I called up the manager, and I was sort of a campus hotdog and looked on with some favor because of my basketball and leadership reputation. He said, "Well, we have a state law. No blacks can compete against whites on state property, and they can't eat in a cafeteria reserved for whites." Although he had always been polite and usually respected my opinion and so on, this time he was firm. [He said,] "I don't care where he eats, I don't care what he eats, but he can't eat there." I said, "Okay." and I went back to the fellow and asked him would he consider, I was having trouble... I was terribly embarrassed, and that embarrassment deepened my feeling about the wrongness of the situation. I asked him, would he consider going into an adjacent classroom. He agreed. He nodded. [He] never said a word.

I took him into a classroom and sat him down in one of those old chairs with the arms on them, and I said, "Wait just a minute." I went back myself. Being white, I could go through the line. I went through and selected every imaginable choice of one meal: beverage, entre, salad, and so forth. They were supposed to be free. I marched past the cashier. They made note of it. I went off to the adjacent building and sat it down in front of him. He smiled and began to dig in. I said, "Wait, you don't have it all. You don't have all the choices that the white people do." He was perplexed, but he was quite patient with me. I marched back through, picked the next selection and filled my tray, did the same thing and went in. He started once again to dig in. I said, "Wait, there is one more selection we have." I went back through the cafeteria. By this time, everybody was steaming and crowding around that I was tweaking the racial nose of the institution and my precious Virginia segregation. I went through the line and took him the last tray and I said, "Now, you have all the same choices as the white people do." I didn't know how to say, I am sorry that this is such a humiliating experience. But he had a tiny smile at his lips, and it melted away, and he began to dig into his meal in quietude. I sat there watching him and trying to think of something to say that would ease the situation and convey to him that he had friends somewhere, and with no luck. I couldn't come up with [anything]. I was twenty years old. I was just coming to discover these things. I got up and left. I wished him well and showed him how to get out. The game began, and I end my story with the fact that it somewhat depressed me, and I only got three points.

- W: One thing I would like to ask is, did you feel very much you were out on a limb, on your own, when doing these sorts of things, or did you have a sense there was a growing group of you, people who were troubled, people of your age, your peer group, who were troubled by the operation of segregation?
- P: At this point, I had never discovered anybody. I seemed to be the only one. Because so many well-meaning whites would hide the fact that they were uneasy about it. But we had other episodes later on in which we saw that whites were

prepared to go a little further. I have written of that account, too. It is sort of a long story about the first black who attempted to break that segregation barrier in a basketball competition, which was outlawed at the time. But I did see some support for them on that. Before long, I discovered a handful, and very small handful. Mostly, you did sense the isolation. The older people, people other than Dr. Alice, were rather disdainful of all of our activity. Now, there was a tradition at this school in the 1940s in which Dr. Alice again was at the heart of it. This was during World War II in which they joined Virginia Union and other colleges of the area and made similar efforts. They, too, faced strict [segregation]. But the difference between the middle 1950s and the 1940s was that there was absolutely no threat in the 1940s because everybody knew that segregation was solid and there would be no real challenge. In the 1950s, a few white authority figures now sense that their precious segregation was at risk.

W: One of the other things you mentioned was the notion that segregation was there from time immemorial and would last forever, [which] was certainly apparent in your own family, so that clearly wasn't somewhere you were getting a glimpse of another world. Could you characterize your father's views on race, and your mother's for that matter?

P: Well, they were not, they did not need to be explicit. I think my mother had a little uneasiness, although she called herself a Florida cracker with great pride, and it was with sharp distinction between [that and a] Georgia cracker. That was a very important difference, even though her mother's family, the Simmons family, came from Georgia. She, I don't think, liked the word "nigger" in any discussion. My father, in early life, he never used the word "nigger" that I recall, but he had very little association, except working class, and they weren't employed in the grocery business, mostly. His word was "darkies." He always referred to them as "darkies," and I grew up thinking that was the conventional word. But other adults around me used the word "nigger" quite often. It wasn't necessary for your parents to say very explicit things like, "Don't do this, don't do that." It was second nature. I knew when to associate and when not [to]. Of course, in early life, you were allowed to play with blacks and so on. Boys with boys was quite different. But we were encouraged to think of them as subhuman. We all had .22 rifles and BB guns, and we would ride our bicycles down Bainbridge Street. There was a black neighborhood there. They would sit out on the porch on Saturday morning, and these boys would bring their rifles, and they would shoot around their porches at the black kids. They would try to intimidate me to do the same, so I began to bring my gun. I don't think I ever hit anybody, but it was considered normal, and to hear them scatter. Maybe somebody was hit with a BB [round metallic pellet]. I don't think anybody was ever mortally wounded or anything. But at the time, we thought it was so normal. It is very much like Trent Lott and [James] Jackson Kilpatrick. [James] Jackson Kilpatrick insists that they grew up that way and could never escape it. Although once you are an adult,

there are challenges to it.

W: Sure, and it seems as though your educational experience would have been the forum in which you actually got exposed to other ideas through Dr. Alice and other people.

P: Yes, but public school, of course, there was no.... The biggest fact we learned in high school that is memorable is that the number of cigarettes manufactured in Richmond would, if stretched end to end, would be eleven trips to the moon and back. The other essential fact for graduating from high school in Richmond was that there are no humans who deserve being deified but one, and that is Robert E. Lee.

W: Did you have a lot of dealings with the Kappa Alpha Order in your time?

P: No. I don't think I know anything about that.

W: I am trying to pick up the threads of your career now. You graduated from RPI a basketball hero.

P: 1957.

W: By that time, 1957, the Little Rock crisis.

P: The summer of 1957, I went home, and I was eligible for the draft. I had been in the Naval Reserve. I went home to Jacksonville, and as September came on, I had an encounter with Klansmen at that point. By this time, I was pretty firm on my views.

W: Explain to me your encounter with the Klansmen.

P: Yes. It was in a movie house. I was double-dating with somebody, and I did not know they were Klansmen.

W: Was this still up here in Richmond?

P: It was in Jacksonville. I graduated in June of 1957, and I had been searching out for experiences for myself to have multicultural opportunity. I had discovered the Encampment for Citizenship through my search for a religious opening beyond my Southern Baptist and Fundamentalist background. Fundamentalism was a co-enemy and co-conspirator with segregation.

W: Your mother and father were both Baptist, were they?

P: Yes.

W: You were raised in that tradition?

P: Yes, or even autonomous Baptists sometimes. In other words, not part of the Southern Baptist Convention. My father did not go to church, but he was convinced I had to, and my mother did. We went to different Fundamentalist churches, and I was active in the church and so on. I went to church about six times a week with all the different activities.

W: As you graduated, you said you were looking for other opportunities.

P: Yes. I graduated from college. I had pretty much worked hard to discover what I needed to know about race, and now I was pretty convinced that I should do something else. I learned about this Encampment for Citizenship, which a lot of people don't know about, but for fifty years, they were offering citizenship education and work experiences in the summer every summer from 1946. They were founded in association with the American Ethical Culture movement. So, I got an opportunity to go there. It was in New York at a Riverdale school. The Ethical Culture School is where it was. I was twenty-two. It was six weeks, and I was shocked to discover that I was elected vice president and a black was elected the president. He was from UCLA. There I was, this hillbilly, people called me a hillbilly when I was eighteen when I went to Cleveland looking for work, and an erudite black guy from California, who was just incredibly skilled with people and so on.

W: Was this the first time you ever had any real sort of interchange with African-Americans, on a personal level?

P: Yes. Well, I had confrontations in Cleveland when I went there. I had encounters in which I experienced anti-Southern feelings from blacks on the street because I played basketball and baseball. I played a little semi-pro baseball there for a little money. But I had a very limited experience. We did have some activities at RPI which centered around the Unitarian Church. We had a wonderful minister there, Eugene Pickett. He went on to be the president of the Unitarian Universalist Association in years to come. He also was the pastor of the big Unitarian church, after he left here, in Atlanta. He was a wonderful man. It was the only place in town that whites knew to go. As I became a young adult, I discovered other places over on North Avenue, black restaurants, where whites were welcome. We had our civil rights activity meetings in those places. But at first, it was thanks to Eugene Pickett. In recent years, I made contact with him. But the Encampment was the first time I was able to explore wide open. We had workshops, and we had lectures. We had exploration in all the intergroup opportunities. I learned about the career in intergroup relations. You could be a human relations director.

They had agencies up north, and you could get a master's degree in it and work on race relations as a career. I said, "Man, sign me up."

W: One thing that strikes me, this is 1957, this has been a pretty rapid trajectory for you, because in 1955, you are making these quite tentative personal gestures, and by 1957, you are thinking about a career that will be entirely about race.

P: I don't know where this came from, but in 1956, I wrote Martin Luther King, while I was a junior, I think, or in the beginning of my senior year. I wrote him a letter supporting the boycott, and the man wrote me back. I have the letter. It is in the library here, the VCU archives. He said, "I am glad people like you are with us and show solidarity with us." I was just inspired. Somehow that and then going to the Encampment, I discovered I was part of a world communion. Let me tell you who was our faculty. June Shagaloff from NAACP was my workshop leader. A black professor, [Jim] Moss was his name, from SUNY [State University of New York] Buffalo. They were my workshop in race relations. I met blacks of high stature. I even wanted to date this girl who was from Vassar, but she already had a boyfriend. I was brokenhearted. She was so beautiful. I had always had trouble with the women I liked. The families of the women I liked didn't like me because I was a phys ed major and a Southerner and what have you. But we had these fabulous lectures. I am trying to think of the Ethical Culture leader [Algernon Black]. I will think of his name in a minute. He was a distinguished fellow. You know the three guys who were killed in Philadelphia, Mississippi. One of them was an Ethical Culture member, I think, or his parents thought well of it, and his funeral was in New York City. I can't remember which one. But this man was the leader, and he published the ceremony, his remarks. He was well-known, and he was a leader in the New York Committee Against Housing Discrimination in the early 1940s. I saw that man and saw how he smoked his pipe and could speak extemporaneously about things, and I said, "God, I want to be like that man."

By the end of the summer, I had learned a lot of lessons, cried some tears over being attacked as a white, and learned about new careers. It was the kind of remarkable thing that I got in my little old '48 Chevrolet, headed home, and by the time I got to South Carolina, when I picked up two hitchhikers on the road who were in uniform, they were in the military, I was hot to talk about race. I made a mistake. We talked about race, and they ended up trying to strangle me. I hustled them out of the car and left them on the side of the road somewhere, I think I was headed for Allendale so it must have been – on [U.S. Highway] 301. That was my re-entry. Before that, I had one pleasant experience. I found a place where I could buy an RC [Cola] and a moon pie. I got back to Jacksonville at that time, and that was the fall that [President] Eisenhower reluctantly sent the troops [to Little Rock, Arkansas].

W: Fall of 1957.

P: Yes, and reluctantly. Momentarily, I was called up. I would have been drafted, so I went into the Navy for two years, where I had actual experience with blacks and once again had sort of a personal war against the racism I found in the Navy.

W: What form did that take?

P: First of all, when I was in boot camp, I was invited to play [and be the assistant coach] for the Great Lakes Naval Training Center Bluejackets, which is a lot of college players, and we had black players. We had a black guy from North Carolina whose self-esteem obviously had been crushed. I thought he was such a wonderful guy. He was such a gentle, big guy. His name was Spraggins. I will never forget him. He was just such a nice guy. I could not bear to see him put down, so I specially coached him. I was pretty much a leader. I had been a co-captain [in college]. I worked with him, and I had a great personal experience with him and some of the other blacks, when I saw the Navy mistreating them.

There was one [black] guy who had been in the Navy as a career guy, and he showed up at our psychiatric unit where I worked. I was a corpsman by day, and in the afternoon, I went off to play [basketball]. I was assistant coach, but I was an enlisted man. One time, I saw this guy had been provoked by the Marines, and I saw the abuse. I confronted the Marines, and they wanted to lock me up for it.

Another occasion, a fellow named Tommy Holland, who became a close friend of mine to this day, was locked up by the Navy. Somebody planted drugs in his locker, and they put him the brig and told nobody about it. I discovered what was going on, and I called his mother, who didn't know me from Adam, in St. Louis, and we fought [it]. She began to initiate things to get [him] out. But when I thought I was alone in this, I went to the pay phone that was in this unit and knew that the commander, whose office was nearby, and the lieutenant commander, who was a decent guy [could hear me on the phone]. The commander was, "Forget it," but the lieutenant commander was a decent man. Flaherty was his name. We had college degrees, a few of us, because we were in the neuropsychiatric unit doing special kind of work. I did some of the scut work on the research under a Ph. D. in psych[ology] for predicting success in boot camp. It was an interesting opportunity.

So, I went to that phone, and I pretended I was calling the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], and I spoke very loudly and told them, [speaking loudly] "Tommy Holland, yes, a [hospitalman]. Tommy Holland, that's his name, he is locked up in the brig," and so on and so on. And I had nobody on the end of that call. Then I called the fictitious NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and did the same thing. All this was in Chicago. And I shouted his name. And Flaherty went like this, and everybody was dazzled

that I would do this. As a result, I became sort of the [unit lawyer from then on]. There was this little Mexican guy there, and we had a kind of multicultural setting. We built family around that kind of thing, the rest of us. And we finally got him [Holland] out of the brig, and nothing happened to him. I think his mother literally [adopted me as a son after that episode I ended up going] to St. Louis [to Holland's home]. That was an example. The Navy was one of the last [military] services to get used to desegregation, even though it had ten years [of] experience.

W: Right. And you served two years?

P: I served two years. I was in the [Naval] Reserves [for six years] and had two years of active duty required.

W: After that, did you come back to Richmond?

P: Yes. I came back here to look for work, and I found a job as a public assistance case worker. See, I had been well-prepared [with my] phys ed degree, and I had worked at a neuropsychiatric unit. [Laughs.] But I had quite a bit of savvy, and I had studied. I used to sneak out the window in the Navy on the job and go over to the library and get these books and bring them back. I read Will Durant's *Story of Civilization*. It was like six volumes in those days. Will and his wife [Ariel] wrote those. I tried to make up for some of my defective phys ed background. And I read a lot about psychiatry and psycho-pathology and so on. I was pretty well-prepared and wrote nice accounts. It was a segregated agency downtown. The little phone line, the metal housing for it on top of it, it went down the row. On this side [were] the black workers. It was a vast, big old room, usually a church Sunday school building. But on the left were the black desks. They faced us, and we faced them, and this telephone line was down the middle, and everybody knew what that telephone line was about. But a young Virginia Union graduate, Ruby Clayton was her name in those days, and her and I were close to the same age and [with the] same interests. At that point, in February of 1960, of course, the sit-ins began in Greensboro. Ten days later, I heard this was going to go on [here]. Should I talk about this?

W: Yes. Hang on, let's get to the point we need to be. You have come back to Richmond. There is nothing resembling a civil rights movement in the sense of direct actions on the streets by the time you have come back, or is there?

P: Not in 1959. Now, they closed the schools in Prince Edward, and I was alarmed about that. I wrote a letter to Virginius Dabney, and he sent me back a letter explaining massive resistance to me as if he wasn't involved. I kept that letter, and that is in the library, too. I came back, and little to my knowledge, there was a Virginia Council on Human Relations. [It] had been founded in 1955. Ken

Morland and Tom Henderson and several other people whose names appear in the records we have accumulated on this, but I had never known them [before]. They were a [half] generation before me, so I had [had] no way to connect. Things were never announced in the newspaper. The trick the Virginia newspapers, except for the Norfolk one, used to oppose civil rights was never to mention any dissent. Unlike the deeper South, [where] they did a lot of race baiting in the newspaper, they never did that here. We were gentlemen here, apparently. So, you never could learn what was going on.

W: So, you really had this sense that...

P: I wasn't hooked up. But 1959, I went down searching for somebody to hook up with [in] Prince Edward because I was so outraged by this time at the school closing, and I saw it as historical, and I saw that it was going to be maybe a model for other southern states at the time. I knew Kilpatrick's influence on William Simmons and the White Citizens' Council and others in Mississippi. Some of my friends, we started an underground newspaper called *The Ghost*. The reason we called it *The Ghost* is because this University of Florida graduate who was in the Army here and I hooked up and ran this paper. He had an underground mimeograph newspaper from Gainesville.

W: What was his name, do you remember?

P: I have his name, [Dick Kollen] and I have got some of these *Ghosts* are in the library in my collection. My collection has not been organized yet because it is so scattered and the money is so tight, but someday it will be. But his name is slipping my mind. Then, the guy who wrote *Even Cowgirls Got the Blues*, [Tom] Robbins, was here, but he thought we were fools to be do-gooders. He just went around. He was a Bohemian, more than serious, but he used to hang out at The Village Restaurant with us. We had two Communists in Virginia at the time. I think there were six, but two of them were here. They would come in, and they would try to sell us on this, and we thought that was ridiculous. So, this *Ghost* was our attempt, even the fall of 1959, to address some of the racial issues.

W: Did you focus heavily on Farmville and Prince Edward [County].

P: No, not that much. I was just getting acquainted with it. We focused mostly on a primitive attitude toward women at the college, you know, they had to be in by nine. And the dogs [attacking civil rights demonstrators] on the street. Then, in February of 1960, I and this fellow who ran *The Ghost* and one other guy in the Army, they were from up north originally, and my first wife, before we were married, who was a student, we sensed these thing going on downtown. We went down there and hooked up with them [Virginia Union University student demonstrators] at Thalhmiers, which is our department store, and the other three

pondered joining them, as did I, and thought, "Well, they would go to the brig," the two guys in the military. One was out of bounds, and one worked in army intelligence, and they would both be punished for being involved in an illegal act. My now ex-wife was a little bit younger. She would have been clearly thrown out of school. She was at RPI.

W: What was her name?

P: Her name was Virginia Tyack. She was born in Oklahoma and had lived in North Carolina. Her father was a successful engineer. She was committed in many ways and was a very gifted painter and studied with one of our distinguished professors. VCU is famous for its art school, among other things. She was a favored student. So, she went with me but began to think of the consequences for her. So, they left, and I joined the blacks. The blacks were led by two fellows. One was Charles Sherrod, who went on to be famous for Albany's civil rights movement.

W: With SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee].

P: Yes, with SNCC. Charles had a partner who invited him to this event at VCU recently celebrating the efforts of civil rights heroes, but we couldn't find the money for him, but he would have loved to come. I just talked to Charles recently. He is from Petersburg. He is a Virginian, and I am proud to say it. We lost him and Wyatt T. Walker and other people who had Virginia experience. We lost Nan Grogan, who is in the state legislature in Georgia. She was a Virginian, or at least went to college here. She was a student worker from Southside Virginia. It looks like I was the only one who stayed home.

W: How did that demonstration down at Thalhimers actually pan out?

P: I have written, once again, published a vignette on that. But the short version is, they just totally denied admission to all of us. I stood with the blacks, and it didn't take long for them to send the firemen and police. They said it was a fire violation. First, it was a firemen who would clear the aisles and so forth. There must have been about...[End of Side 1, Tape A.] It was a rather majestic scene because the blacks had such a gentle presence but a determination. It was very inspiring for me. It was my first demonstration. I mean, I had demonstrated as a solo civil rights activist.

W: Were there any other whites involved in this?

P: No, there were no whites there, but they didn't leave me there long. Before long, the firemen, some plain clothes policemen and, I think, a uniformed policeman and some management from the store. Incidentally, among the junior

management there were people I went to college with, and they had utter contempt for me. While I was there, people in the audience were heckling me particularly. One lady who recognized me from south Richmond who was standing there, there was a big crowd of whites heckling everybody, and she came up and spit on me. So, I learned what passive resistance was all about right there and then. The authorities came and asked me, "Where are you from? New York?" I said, "I am from Richmond." They said, "Whereabouts?" In those days, we called the Fan [neighborhood] here [in the] West End. It meant Randolph or [the Fan]. West End today means ten miles that way. They were stunned. They said, "Where do you work?" I said, "For the City of Richmond." Once again, they were stunned. [They asked,] "What department?" I said, "The Welfare Department." They, I think, were stunned that any white from here would be there, and they picked me up and they said, "You are being asked to leave." They did not say, "Now, get out." They just picked me up, two men in plain clothes, picked me up, lifted me and then got me, kind of pushed me like this around the corner to the escalator and kind of gave me a little shove. Then they caught up with me and, the next turn, they did the same. This was the fourth or fifth floor up, and they kept on pushing me. We got to the first floor. I went out to, it must have been, Sixth Street. They got me to the double doors there, and they opened the first set, pushed me toward the second, opened the last set, pushed me out on the street and said, "Don't you ever come back here again." I thought to myself, "Well, I've been through a door, and I will never return," which was true. That was my first experience with it. But they didn't want to arrest me.

W: Did you feel vulnerable in terms of not just your physical safety, I guess at some level, but your job, being city work?

P: Oh, yes. In fact, it was on the line. But, see, the papers didn't cover it. They didn't put my name in the paper, and nobody knows. Hardly anybody would know that I was there, and it wasn't reported in the paper that there were any whites.

W: Did your parents ever know?

P: My father was living here, but my mother lived in Florida. They were divorced. She lived in Jacksonville at the time. She had already known me as a dissident. By the time of 1957, she and I had talked at great length about race, and she was so disturbed. But she loved me. She was a dear, competent woman, who went to the eighth grade. Her father was illiterate, my grandfather, for whom I used to work summers down in Manatee County. She was very disturbed, but she had to reconcile these facts. This is my son. I adore him, I respect him. He has gone to school. He came from nowhere. He flunked out of high school twice. He was a loser, and he couldn't spell, he couldn't read in high school, and now he is a college graduate, and he has been doing this. She had to put it together, and she ended up with this kind of thing, "Well, this is your generation. I guess

you get to do with it what you want.”

W: So, she was sort of reconciled to the fact that change would come, but it would be a subsequent generation. She didn't want any part necessarily in helping to bring about change.

P: Yes. She didn't want a part of it, and she had trouble being around me very long. When she would come to Richmond to see me and my kids, I had three daughters, and she loved them, and they looked just like her, she was gorgeous, too, when she was young, when she came, she would stay with my aunt. She could not bear to spend nights here because she would hear all this integration talk.

W: What about your father's views?

P: My father disappeared. I had a confrontation with my father in subsequent years when I came to work at the Medical College of Virginia. I was teaching sociology and other social science subjects at the School of Nursing. We had a confrontation, and I lost touch with him for several years. The story was about race. My very first publication, I had the good fortune of doing a paper on Prince Edward County from my thesis from the University of Pennsylvania, which was on the Prince Edward County school closing story. It had been used by the feds, the U. S. Office of Education, Justice Department, as kind of a briefing handbook for how to get into the case. It became sort of celebrated. Once when they called the Penn library and asked them, "Could you make me a copy," the people in the Penn library said, "What is it with this thing? A master's thesis. There's been forty requests." Burke Marshall and others had gotten the thing. Somebody found a letter in the Kennedy collection at Harvard of Burke Marshall's request for my thesis. So, it was rather famous.

Rupert Picott was a celebrated black educator, a remarkable man who deserves a biography, and he was the head of the Virginia Teachers' Association, the black professional association here. He was a sidekick of Happy Lee's and very close to the Virginia Council on Human Relations and a very important partner in almost every dramatic desegregation act. Restaurants, schools, everything. He was just matchless. I had the good fortune as a young guy, ambitious to be an academic, to have him invite me to write a paper on Prince Edward for the *Kappan*, an educational [journal]. I just took my thesis. He wrote the intro and the finish, and the rest of it are my words. He was a major author, and he was the one who was invited. So, we wrote this article in 1964. I think it came out in May, 1964, so you know the significance of the date. During the working of that paper, you know, we had to meet, and I invited him over to my house one night. I already had two children by this time.

My father would come. He lived alone in a room up the street here, and he would come to my house and just sit down. He had been an alcoholic and was low-performing and so forth, but he did keep his job once my mother and my brother and I left him. But he was very dysfunctional. He would come there. You know, he was the grandfather of my children, and I wanted to make him feel welcome. But the race issue, he always loved to push buttons on the race issue. This night, Rupert, Dr. Picott came to my house, [my father] was sitting on the couch. It was such an honor for me to have this man come in my house, sit down at my dining room table, and we are going to plan this article, my very first publication. You can picture the honor I was sensing. He came into the room, and I said, "This is my father, this is Dr. Picott." My father wouldn't get up. He wouldn't get up and shake his hand. Dr. Picott was gracious. I was enraged because he obviously was going to insult the man. We went over, and I tried to keep the heat inside my chest calm. We went over and finished our work. He left, and my father never got up. He just sat there looking at us from the distance. [Picott] walked out of the house, and I apologized to him. It was another impossible event, and the encounter with whites who refuse to honor black dignity. When he was gone, I went to my father, and I let go of my rage, and I asked him to leave, and he left. I didn't see him for three years. After that, I was applying to go to graduate school at Kentucky and UNC in medical sociology.

W: Just for the record, your master's was from Penn, and the master's was in...?

P: Was in Human Relations.

W: Then subsequently, you went to Kentucky for your doctoral work.

P: Yes. I came back here and taught for two years at the School of Nursing and then went to Penn.

W: What was that experience like, getting out of the South again?

P: Well, I think this was my fourth year out of the South of the years I had lived, and it was great. I was getting pretty sophisticated. My child was born at HUP, Hospitals of the University of Pennsylvania, my Suzannah. There were a lot of progressive people there. By this time, I was hooked up with the American Friends Service Committee. I had met Jean Fairfax, and I had worked in [Prince Edward] County. I organized some recreational and educational activities there in 1960-1961. By the time I left, I had lots of connections.

W: Did you know Jean at all from her work in Prince Edward County?

P: Yes, I was indirectly related. I mainly worked with Helen Baker, who was the field person, one of the first full-time resident workers there.

W: How would you characterize the American Friends Service Committee's contribution to not just Prince Edward County but to the southern civil rights movement more generally?

P: Well, as you may have heard the other night, she was responsible for the southern programs [at AFSC], which was a big focus in those days in the deep South and the border South. They had the view that North Carolina would be a soft touch for desegregating, and at the southeastern regional office, Bill Bagwell and Charles Davis were active in those days. A series of [AFSC] visitors would come to Prince Edward to check it out. One of the most remarkable ones was a man named Harry Boyte. He went on to work [later] with SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference], and he wrote some marvelous reports.

The first thing that would impress you there that I had opportunity to see was Helen Baker's work. She was a Quaker. She was a black Virginian, and she had experienced segregation. She had a magical quality about her in which she could finesse almost every difficult situation. She gained some confidence among the white segregationists. It was hard to dismiss her. The Quaker aura hovered over some of their work that meant they were peace-loving and sacrificing and so on. It was something extra special. She worked perfectly in that setup. I saw her and other people as well. In addition to placing [Prince Edward County] kids, some sixty-seven to seventy, there is some dispute about how many kids they placed around the country, [Baker did much] community work, developing leadership among the black women, providing substitute experiences for the children and a variety of other things. The other thing I sense that was accomplished by Helen and with Jean [Fairfax as] back up and the others visitors with the AFSC [American Friends Service Committee], which I learned, I learned how to do it with them, was peacekeeping. It made it impossible for....

[Tape breaks.]

W: You were talking about the way in which the American Friends Service Committee worked and in particular about their peacekeeping resolution work.

P: Yes. They kind of made it impossible for local authorities to allow violence. There also was a watchdog side to this. That is to say if you did not behave in a civilized way, unlike other parts of Southside Virginia and elsewhere in the deep South, the story would get out through AFSC. It would end up in the *Philadelphia Bulletin* or *Inquirer*, or it would be in the *New York Times* or what have you.

W: So, you think they were very shrewd in understanding the value of publicity?

P: As time went on. At first, I don't think the white authorities dreamed that it would be embarrassing, but after they saw the reaction. When the foreign press came

there and they saw the reaction, face-saving became more and more important, and to put kind of a constitutional face on this white supremacy position became more and more important. In fact, that was a habit in Virginia. The Commission on Constitutional Government, [or] whatever it was called; James Jackson Kilpatrick was their media education guy, and he was responsible for pumping out these pseudo-constitutional tracts which were just fronts for, "let's protect our segregation." I mean, states rights had nothing to do with it at all. States rights was just an excuse because on other issues, states rights weren't important to them. For example, they received federal money, [Virginia was] the highest per capita recipients of federal money [among all the states], and it never occurred to them that this was [anti-states rights]. If you wanted federal relief from disaster, you'd go to the federal tit and start your suckling.

W: Do you think, though, that means, in a perverse way maybe, that the segregationists were actually more sophisticated than the liberals or the pro-desegregation forces, if they understood the value of publicity and of a media initiative.

P: Yes, and they were also appearing to be civilized. That was the Virginia style, you know. As I said at the meeting the other night, if anybody in the press or in public said to them, "Well, you're taking the same stand as they take in Mississippi and Alabama and Georgia," and they said, "Yes, that's an unsavory thing because they are giving segregation a bad name." Yes, they were pretty savvy, and they got more savvy as time went on. They would try to bring people down who weren't fitting this public relations effectiveness in an adequate way. But see, [Harry Flood] Byrd [U.S. Senator, D- VA] was kind of schizophrenic about this. Byrd was still strong. He was schizophrenic in the sense that he still thought this was a rural state. He still thought that only 9 percent of the eligible [electorate should dictate what happens]. [Byrd thought that] if everybody could [not] pay the poll tax and did encounter discrimination, it would be the same [in Virginia] for years to come and that industrialization was not upon us in the South. He was really bizarre in the way he resisted technological developments and social developments. It [court order ending massive resistance] made for a little crack in it. The crack created on one side, people now call them, moderates. [like] David Mays, I have part of his published papers up there from the newspaper. Very few of them have been published. I am not sure how many are available. David Mays was an example. Because he [finally came out] against de jure Massive Resistance, he was called a moderate, but, now, he was a white supremacist. I have a little account, some notes I have [made] on Virginia history and some abstracts from journals and books that I might share with you if you would like.

W: It is interesting, obviously Virginia has this way of going about its business, of preserving white supremacy and the Jim Crow system, or at least substantial

elements of it, that is paternalistic. There is a hierarchy, and things are in their order, in their place. What about the other side? The folks that you were beginning to move into orbit with among the white liberals of the 1950s and into the early 1960s? Was there also a sense that, actually, we could do a lot more to make segregation bearable before they got to the point of saying this will never work and it has to be removed entirely. Were there people who could not do that extra leap?

P: Well, yes. Let's see if we can dissect these people. At first, the segregationists were uniform. There was no dissent from Massive Resistance until the court said you couldn't have it anymore. Then the message became a little more confusing. As I recall, there were only a handful of people. There was one candidate for governor, a woman [who opposed segregation openly]

W: Louise Wensel?

P: Yes, it was Wensel who tried, but I don't remember what kind of record she was able to establish, but she didn't get very far. She was little heard from during those periods in the newspapers and so on. Now, I don't know how Norfolk treated this. Norfolk had a number of people from other parts of the country, and northern Virginia was not as developed as it is now. We had more natives as a proportion up there, and there were hardcore segregationists there, especially in Alexandria and some of the traditional towns and villages up there. But that part of the state was changing, too.

The segregationists, at first, said, we just got to equalize. But there had been that struggle all during the 1950s, let's just equalize, and we'll get rid of the threat. But by 1959, they saw there was something more involved. It is not going to be quite as easy, and so they figured out, in Mays' words and what I heard often was, "I'll tell you what we'll do: we'll have freedom of choice, and we'll let any black apply through this convoluted system, and they can go to any school they want, and then all the whites there will intimidate them and scare them and they will go home. That will happen." It was especially hoped that it would happen in Arlington because Arlington was the most heterogenous culturally and geographically. People came from different places. So, they expected it to give in. The Massive Resistance was against the will of Arlington County. That was what my letter to Virginius Dabney was all about, "Why, if you hate central government of the United States, wouldn't you hate the central government of Virginia?"

W: I guess what I am driving is, there is an interesting shift in what it means to be a southern liberal. In 1945, a southern liberal will be someone who says we want to equalize the situation within segregation. By 1950, 1951, a southern liberal is someone who says we want desegregation. Curiously, the position of some of

your massive resisters looks exactly the same as the position of a liberal in 1945: let's equalize to avoid desegregation.

P: I think that is probably the way it was. The so-called liberals were so cautious and so quiet that there were only a handful of people who would do that. Even the Virginia Council on Human Relations, Aubrey Brown and others, were bitterly opposed to us younger ones. I organized a student movement in the Virginia Council. By the way, there is very little evidence of it. I don't see any papers on it, any paperwork on it.

W: What was the objection of Brown and the elders?

P: They did not like demonstrations.

W: So, it was the direct action component they didn't like.

P: Yes. They wanted the negotiations mostly behind the scenes, so there was something of a split there as the 1960s came on. Aubrey actually was kind of nervous with the younger people.

W: Where were you drawing your young recruits from?

P: Colleges. Black colleges. We had some great people. The black fellow who was an ABC news anchor there for a while. He died of AIDS. He had a blood transfusion. That Richmond family. [Max] Robinson was his name. His brother [Randall Robinson] is the pan-African advocate. He was in our group. He was a Virginia Union student, and that was an example. My own students, women nursing students, were in [the Virginia College Council on Human Relations]. I think we had about fifteen, eighteen campuses involved. Randolph Macon Women's College [was one]. Not so much UVA, The University of Richmond, for example, had George Modlin, who now has an entertainment center named for him, he bitterly opposed it. In fact, he played an incredible role in the 1954 Supreme Court decision. Archibald Robertson was one of the lawyers who was to defend Virginia and Prince Edward, along with T. Justin Moore and several others. I think Lindsay Almond was the attorney general. [Segregationists said,] "They got all these experts who come down here with their dolls to the court, and that's hokum." For a long time, they treated it as hokum. They said, "Don't take it seriously." But they saw the federal judges taking it seriously. Dr. Ken Morland was one of the people who was involved in one of those cases, the Delaware case. Archibald Robertson was assigned the job of finding some experts, so he turned around and said, "where am I going to go." He went to George Modlin at the University of Richmond and George Modlin said, "you got to get the leading segregationist expert, and that is Henry Garrett. He is a native Virginian from Halifax County, and he is the chairman of psychology at Columbia University and

president of the APA, the American Psychological Association. He is the perfect guy for it." So, they did, and that is who opposed [segregation in the courts]. Who was the most famous expert witness [for the NAACP] in 1954? [Kenneth Clark and Mamie Clark], his wife? Well, we know who we are talking about. Anyway, that was the opposition. Garrett went before the federal courts in some of those cases and testified on behalf of segregation. There was a whole team. My list shows about fifteen, eighteen social scientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists. We'll think of it [his name] in a minute, but [Garrett] was their professor, major dissertation, both Kenneth and Mamie... He is famous. He is still alive. So, Modlin was the key to academic racism for Virginia. Of course, [Garrett] testified in other cases elsewhere.

W: Okay. We sort of leapt a little bit forward to getting to the Virginia Council on Human Relations. Tell me about when you first became aware of them. You mentioned that in your initial activism, they hadn't really appeared on your radar yet. Even at the time of the sit-in at Thalheimers, they were not [yet] really a part of my scene.

P: They weren't involved in the sit-ins. A lot of us more youthful people were thinking they were not hip. They were old-timers and so on. We had some uneasiness, but I saw the value of both. I was kind of on the cusp of this younger generation who had no patience for negotiating anymore and how negotiation, in my mind, was just another technique. Let's see, 1960, I don't know how I discovered it, but the AFSC had connections with the Southern Regional Council. Happy Lee came on board [at the Virginia Council on Human Relations in 1961].

Oh, I know how it happened. I really became deeply involved while I was at [Medical College of Virginia]. It became conspicuous to me while I was at MCV. I think I proposed to them, Happy Lee and others, that we have a college council. I said, I have forty women here who are interested, and some of them have boyfriends at Virginia Union [and elsewhere]. I had some remarkable people. In fact, my girls, I called them my girls, they loved me being there. I was the only male. And they loved the social sciences because it was an open place [in their nurse training]. In fact, we organized the support of one young woman to go to the march at [the Edmund] Pettus Bridge in Selma. We sent her with money and everything, and she was beaten while she was there, and she was beaten again in the jail. Then she came home, and they wanted to kick her out of school, so we organized protection for her. One of the physicians I got involved was an Egyptian, Sammy Said. I will never forget him. He was a handsome, tall Egyptian. He was a respiratory expert. She came home all puffed up and everything. These were my favorite people there, my students.

So, I saw the great need, so I pumped it up. There were several other developments around the state, so we connected and we worked with Nancy

Adams and others in Prince Edward. AFSC had independent efforts to organize youth at colleges nearby and some over at Roanoke, I think. Before long, I think, if I am correct, we had close to 800 people on our list affiliated in some way. The University of Richmond and selected other schools, [like] Randolph-Macon [men's college], they harassed our young people.

W: Were some schools particularly bad for recruiting and activism because of the censure from the administration, and were some schools particularly good?

P: Virginia Union was good, from my [perspective]. I wasn't familiar with all of the campuses because we would have people doing things at different campuses, like out in the west. Randolph-Macon Women's College was pretty good because Ken Moreland was there, and he had sort of a following, like I did. He was a professor at an all women's school, and he was highly respected. Then, RPI [Richmond Professional Institute] was good because we had [something of a liberal] tradition there. Randolph-Macon was terrible. Ben Ragsdale, who was at the meeting the other night, I think he was harassed by his administration. The poor people at the University of Richmond, that was the worst. It is a Baptist school, and at the time, it was really Baptist. They objected to federal funds. I knew faculty there. There was a physics professor there who wasn't allowed to get federal funds to build a lab, and so they wanted to have a physics program without any equipment. That is how ridiculous [President] George Modlin was. Now, he is a hero [here]. Virginia has a habit of now celebrating all of these white segregationists and pretending like segregation never existed and they had nothing to do with it. Then they ask people like me to forgive and forget. I have trouble with that. Maybe I am missing some Quaker characteristics, but I will continue to work on it.

W: Sure. When you brought together these like-minded youthful people...

P: And their professors.

W: ...and went to see the folks at the Virginia Council on Human Relations, who were the main players within the Council when you first got on the scene?

P: You mean the state?

W: Yes.

P: The state was hosting this, and this was all mixed up in time with my work on a Prince Edward project in which Happy Lee... The American Friends Service Committee, the Southern Regional Council and the advisory committee to the U. S. Civil Rights Commission all wanted a hard-hitting report on Prince Edward to lay out. Jean Fairfax was an advocate of this in the early days. I think she

started in, like, 1962 to try to get this done. Bill Bagwell of the southeastern regional office [of the AFSC] was seen as the person to do it at first, and then he couldn't break free for the time. I had already done my thesis, and so I looked like a pretty good backup. I had already interviewed 300 people, I think, at the time. So, I had more interviews, and I got hooked in. It was right around the same time that I was finishing that up. Then during the summer of 1963 and getting the extra data and Ken Morland getting that paper in to the U. S. Civil Rights Commission, which was dumped in the trash, which I described the other night.

W: You should just mention that again for the tape.

P: Yes. I did a report on Prince Edward expanding on my own work for the master's thesis in the summer interviewing further people who had figured in both [supporting school closing and] segregation and those who were trying to get the schools back open. I submitted my working paper to Ken Morland, and he added information from Bob Green's surveys. Bob Green was an education professor who did some very innovative studies, one of the first to enjoy experimental design conditions before and after [in] IQ studies, before a stimulus and after a stimulus. [Morland] put all that together and wrote a better paper, a more meaty one, and gave it to the U. S. Civil Rights Commission. Early January, just after the year began, 1963, they said, okay, we are going to publish it, and so on. The staff said it at the U. S. Civil Rights Commission. Everybody was happy about it, and nothing happened, and nothing happened. Then the Civil Rights Bill in May, I think it was, of 1964, came and went. The staff at the Commission had been asked what happened to the paper, and they said, well, we can't do this and we can't do that. So, before long, finally by the summertime, we had the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and I think we had the renewal of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, as well.

Now, the staff was telling us, well, the reason your paper got dumped and never got published and never will be published is because a deal was made with the southern, principally the senators but also the other congressman, and that we wouldn't embarrass Harry Byrd, Senate Finance Committee chair, and we will keep a low profile on it. Besides, they said, it was too controversial and too radical, and they didn't like the word "tragedy" in the title and things like that. The staff of the Commission was usurped, and it never hit light. But I saved my paper, and we searched through [Morland's] house and thankfully found his, and we will be putting it on the website that I have at VCU, where all the other [Prince Edward County] papers are found.

W: Clearly, the events in Prince Edward County occupied a lot of the energies and time and attention of the sort of folks you were mixing with. I am, in a way, more intrigued by what was going on in Richmond, in the Richmond Council on Human Relations, trying to do things within Richmond and also the relationship between

that local Council and the statewide organization. Who were the main figures involved within Richmond who were concentrating on this?

P: I am having trouble remembering the actual presidents and so forth. As I said, I was distracted and wouldn't always be at those meetings. But the Richmond Council sort of had local desegregation on its mind. The state Council was popping in and out every place, and Prince Edward, because the AFSC was there, provided another headquarters for civil rights in many ways. Then there was another center, hotspot, a place like Kenbridge in Southside Virginia, where the student SSOC and other students were working out of, and some black indigenous people were working out of. Then there were the lawsuits, the continuing parade of suits, particularly at this time now Henry Marsh was starting, and later on by 1970 was Judge Benton, whom you may have met the other night. But the local Council, as I recall, I can't remember all the presidents and so on in those days.

But one of the principal things was restaurants. I remember we all knew that there were 650 restaurants in Richmond, and they were all white restaurants. They were all segregated. Ewart's Cafeteria was one. It was a wonderful place across from the [John Marshall Hotel]. It had the greatest spoon bread you ever put in your mouth, especially if you put their pure butter on it. There were lots of [restaurants]. The Chinese restaurants, I remember, were resistant. In the 1950 census, I think, we had 600 Chinese in the whole metro area. Now, we have thousands and thousands of Asians. During that period, a lot of concentration was on desegregating the restaurants. The Richmond Council was a little bit independent of some of this activity. Just as the state Council on Human Relations was a bit remote on occasions from SRC in Atlanta, so were the local councils. They had a life of their own in many ways and really were in many ways independent.

W: When did you come across people like Isabel Rogers and Hilda Warden?

P: Hilda Warden and myself and Ruby Clayton Walker... Unfortunately, she is not healthy enough to be interviewed. She would have been a great interview. We all met at the [Richmond] welfare department. We were all activists together. Hilda was a little bit older than me and was a one-woman civil rights movement before I came. She desegregated the bathrooms at the welfare department, all by herself. She was a tough lady in many ways. They were active in different periods, some of us in the local Council. I recall when we got this campaign together to go test the restaurants, there were people in it, like Governor Doug Wilder was one of them. I think this was before he was in the General Assembly, I believe. I may have my dates a little confused. Who else was involved? Jay Nickens was on the test group. Jay Nickens was the president of Consolidated Bank, the one....

[End of Side A2]

- P: ..., but it will come to me later, the black bank. Jay Nickens was a remarkable man. He joined us. Several whites. I think Harry Cohn, the Held brothers. The Held brothers were lawyers. We had this overlapping group. I don't know, there must have been about sixty people that any given night, we would have six, eight, or ten who would go to a restaurant and try to break it, break it down that night.
- W: Tell me a little bit more about the sorts of white folks who were getting involved with this. It sounds like we are talking really 1963, 1964, that sort of period. I am intrigued to know what sort of whites got involved with the Richmond Council on Human Relations or the statewide Council.
- P: I am trying to think of people. My memory is kind of meager on this, I am disappointed to say. I could tell you kind of the class of people. Some of them were not from Virginia. They were northerners who had come here to work in an industry that had a more heterogenous population. Others were religiously motivated. I think some of them were from the Union Theological Seminary.
- W: Like Isabel.
- P: We are talking about whites. I don't really recall Isabel sitting in, but she may have.
- W: Right. Sorry. I doubt very much she did, but it strikes me that the sort of whites who were in the Richmond Council on Human Relations are not necessarily the sort of people who were going to sit in.
- P: Yes. There were a couple of people, I think, who may have been professors at Virginia State, whites, Virginia State or Virginia Union, in the Richmond area who joined us. There was a young Associated Press stringer who was with us. His name slips my mind, but he was always sympathetic with us. On his off hours, he would go with us. He and Ruby were good friends. Who else? Some of the older students who were out, and I would try to recruit people to do it. There weren't a lot of whites. The thing that was remarkable to me was the blacks were all distinguished leaders of the community and we were the dregs of the white race.
- W: It doesn't strike me that that is really quite true.
- P: No, though you know what I am saying.
- W: You were all highly educated, compared with your relative status in your respected communities.

P: Our status was low, or young, and unestablished. When I say dregs, I mean how we were viewed by the white community and greeted with silence, and we weren't successful. I remember going to one of the earliest Chinese restaurants over on Broad Street near the Boulevard, and we got kicked out. They wouldn't let us in. At others, they let us in, and we brought a lot of money with us, except for people like me. I was making about \$1,800 a year at the welfare department. I can't remember. I just remember the distinction between class.

W: It seems that what is really going on here, and I have got this from other interviewees as well, is that you had a Richmond Council on Human Relations that did certain things, and then there were a bunch of activists, some of whom were also members of the Richmond Council on Human Relations. But actually, the activists, in terms of direct action, protest marching, picketing, sitting in, they actually were very much a minority of people who would be members of the Richmond Council on Human Relations, certainly if they were white. African-Americans might have those dual allegiances, but it was much ____.

P: Yes. But you have to recall that our middle class blacks were very conservative people. At first, in 1960, they really objected to the students. They said, you were taking risks, and you were giving the black community a bad name, and, you are going to graduate, and you are going to leave town, and you are going to leave us holding the bag. But it only took this picketing that followed that, before long, they recruited [many of their elders]. And it took that picture of Mrs. Tinsley, the dentist's wife, in *Life Magazine*, in which the dog was chewing on her and the police were holding back the reigns. It was a profound influence on the black community. I think it radicalized some of the middle class blacks. They said, okay, maybe our youth are on target here. They began to show up on the picket line in front of Thalhimers. Thalhimers was owned by Jews who were moderate people, and they were just following convention. I don't think it was very many months before they figured they would have to give in, and they were all waiting for everybody else to give in. Let's say, if Millar and Rhoads [Department Store] would go with it. Desegregation meant not just the restaurants there. It meant that you could try on shoes and clothes on location, and you didn't have to pay for them without trying them on and that sort of thing. Baldwin's [Department Store] over in south Richmond, which was our department store, to my knowledge, never gave in because the south side was a bit harder and less educated people and a lot more [segregationist] – northerners often called [them] – rednecks. They think that's a convenient way to refer to poor people or uneducated or disadvantaged and consequently have racist views and so on. There was much more of that on south side, and south side seemed to be more fearful for people to demonstrate. Hull Street is south side downtown. It was a separate city early in the century, Manchester.

W: I am still struggling to get a real handle on how you would characterize the

contribution of the Council on Human Relations, given there is all this good stuff going on.

P: The local ones? Well, they wrote letters. Another thing that was important, they wrote letters to the editor. They experienced discrimination in them, but increasingly, the papers had to acknowledge them, and they pounded on the newspapers about their practices of employment. The classified ads were segregated, the C section, as we called it. They began to try to pound on that. There would be sort of negotiation teams. Sometimes they were self-selected, and sometimes it was official business of the local Council. We often had speakers. The guy who wrote *Black Like Me* was brought here [by the Richmond Council on Human Relations].

W: John Howard Griffin.

P: John Howard Griffin, yes. I had dinner with him. I had the good fortune of joining him. We had impact. Before long, we were able to use what used to be called the Mosque. It used to be city auditorium, the only venue for that. We began to be able to have mixed audiences there and have programs. Later, I think, in the middle 1960s, when Laverne [Byrd Smith] and some of the others were president or vice presidents, they had even radicals come.

W: We will move into the late 1960s in due course. It strikes me that around about the mid 1960s, in a way, the fruition of the various works come to pass. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes a difference. The Voting Rights Acts of 1965.

P: Oh, yes. It changed the phone calls that you got. The threatening phone calls were reduced a little bit. 1964 made a lot of difference. You could turn to people and say, that is against the law. Did you know that is against the law? In so many words, they would say to you, you mean the law is on your side now?

W: That must have been empowering on some level.

P: Oh, my god, did that give us confidence. See, there was a time when I dreamed there would never be desegregation. I was never sure. When I was operating as a student, it never occurred to me that this would ever end. I don't know why I thought that my effort would amount to anything. I don't know why I did it.

W: Talk me through, you know, as you get to 1965, you then get the Voter Registration Act. Within certain parameters, that means that Jim Crow is statutorily dead, that the system has been brought down. What did you feel there was left to be done? What role did you think white liberals like yourself might play, and what was going to come next?

P: When did the voting rights program at the Southern Regional Council [begin]?

W: The Voter Education Program starts in 1962, and then there is a second one instituted in 1966.

P: Yes. I think the Virginia Council looked toward learning what they could about that and tried a little voter education. Meanwhile, another organization was run by blacks, Crusade for Voters, and Dr. Ferguson Reid, the doctor who had been the first twentieth century [black] member of the [Virginia] General Assembly, with other people started that. They kind of assumed some of the mantle for that. NAACP supported them. So, the Council on Human Relations began to sort of slip, the Richmond Council, slip in its spectrum because I think their focus had been mainly on public accommodations. Not altogether. Then, the younger people were getting a little older, and they were establishing other things. Some disappeared and said, oh, it's done now. The other important development was the emergence of the black caucus mentality, that [occurred] occasionally around 1966, I guess, and so on, some blacks said, we're done with fooling around with nursing white people on racism. We are going to have a black caucus, and you are not invited. Happy Lee was a victim of that. At Shaw University, he had an incredible experience in which he was an intimate friend with the president and eventually was told in so many words that he was no longer needed, even though he had helped build that [institution up]. I experienced that, and every white I knew. A lot of whites started getting out of the civil rights movement and said, well, if the blacks don't want us, we won't go. Some people had a limited commitment to it. Also, some whites had a limited commitment to it and couldn't fathom how they would convert for the upcoming era, the mopping up era.

W: Right. Is part of the problem that, ultimately, these people were liberals and not radicals?

P: Yes, or they had a superficial definition of what commitment to human rights means. They may have been moderate in method, but some people who are dedicated to human rights would find a new way. They would be tenacious and say, how am I going to find a new way to contribute to this, and, what is the new racism all about? Obviously, it is economic opportunity. Obviously, it is the ability to get into school. So, some of them did turn to sincere things. Plus, professional human relations [programs], and professional preparation [with] master's degree at Penn and NYU, and Dan Dodson, and they were now having meetings in which you trained people in human relations. You could go to companies and train them, and you could go to bureaucracies and train people on desegregation methodologies and so forth. So, some people learned how to commit to new methods, and others said, well, I am sick and tired of being called a honkey now and I am not going to do this anymore. I have done my part. And they went on.

People like me kind of parlayed it into a career and said, well, I am going to work on the successive revolutions that occurred. There was the legal one, and there was the economic and other opportunity one, and then there was the psychological one about identity and the like, and finally, to me, there was the biological one, the health, you know, how subtle white supremacy leads to higher infant mortality and all of the things in the health field. I spent my later years working on the biological revolution, trying to improve obstetric performance and differential effects of disease and lack of healthcare and so forth.

W: Obviously, those problems are enduring ones that are far from eradicated.

P: Yes, they are.

W: Let's backtrack a little bit and go through the Black Power era. I think you are suggesting that the Council on Human Relations in Richmond has really sort of outlived its usefulness at a certain level. In a way, it is a victim of its own success. African-Americans feel more empowered. They are getting more political clout. They are getting some economical....

P: They are getting some [public] offices, too.

W: And therefore, in a way, they are able to do the things for themselves that part of the agenda of the movement had already been.

P: Right.

W: What about your own career in the formal Councils on Human Relations, the statewide and then moving on towards the Commission on Human Relations.

P: What do you mean, my career?

W: Well, you end up being president of the Commission on Human Relations, which is much later, but....

P: In the 1970s, I was still involved in the Richmond Council on Human Relations. I was president for just a year, and I resigned because I didn't get tenure and I had to fight it. It was over my racial attitudes. We had a dean in 1972 who still thought that I was controversial because I was advocating opportunities for students and so forth. [He was the] dean [of] arts and sciences. He was a Harvard person. And we had a few administrators who were unfriendly all the way through. We had a terrible president at MCV during those early 1960s.

W: You were still with the RCHR throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s.

P: Right, I think until 1971 or something like that. I am not sure of the year, but I remember writing a letter to the folks. I was struggling with that, and the disruption from the failure to get tenure. It was incredible work. At the same time, my wife left me. Oh, and I was behind on my dissertation. I did two dissertations. That big black book up there is the one, my dissertation. So, all this happened. I did my orals [exams] and got fired, and my wife left me, all in one month. It was hard work, so I resigned [from the RCHR presidency], and other people started taking it up. But I could see that it was losing its effect and that there was no dramatic thing I could do. With less time and energy and attention to it, I thought I was cheating the people who were hanging on. But they revived it a little bit.

W: One of the last big sort of hurrahs for the Richmond branch was the campaign against the media in Richmond.

P: Yes.

W: Where, I guess, Theodore Thornton was one of the architects of that protest, but also Henry Marsh does some of the litigation, and [Laverne] Byrd Smith is involved in it.

P: Yes. See, they revived it a little bit. If I have my dates straight, I think my inattention to some of the business, maybe I hurt it a little bit, and they brought it back a little bit. Apparently, it lasted a few more years, a couple more years. I think it outlasted the state office. I am not sure. But the state office became less and less relevant. I recall another last hurrah was, as we saw it dying. Ora Lomax and Wally Bless. Wally Bless was president at one time. He is dead now.

W: He was the guy who owned the [health food] restaurant.

P: Yes. Everybody loved him. He did not have an intellectual approach. He had a kind of all-embracing, loving... He was a salesman, essentially. He sold human relations for a living, and he did it with hummus on the side. He was a remarkable fellow. I have forgotten what year this was, but it had to be no earlier than 1969 [when] several of us gathered, and we saw the thing sort of fluttering away. We said, well, let's analyze what the needs are. Why are we having trouble finding where we test [the system]. We often went to city council on issues, dumb-dumb bullets, things like that, the rubber bullets they were buying for all the cops. We said, you know what? We need to have a wider impact.

I was thinking about coalitions at the time. I had coalition on my brain. What I did was to map out on some newsprint, and we went down to Wally Bless's Main Street Grill. They set up a thing and they said, okay, Ed, you tell us about your coalition idea. So, I put up the newsprint all around the place. It was 17th and Main, and we sat in a booth. I told him what a coalition could be and who would

be in it. I don't remember all the details, but the papers for it are in the library archives. I proposed that we get as many organizations in on it, and each organization would commit to the idea of cooperating when we can on public stands on a given issue, and if you couldn't, then you wouldn't be represented in taking that stand. We would have to be not exactly unanimous. We had a theory about how people could back out. These are some of the initial groups: WILPF, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; the Richmond chapter NAACP; an Arab-American organization; the [local] ADL [Anti-Defamation League], and there must have been one or two more. I think it started out with five or six, and we all met. We had an organizational meeting at St. Paul's Church, and we presented. We had thirty-five organizations there, and six signed on, something like that. So, the coalition, we started to build that. We took stands on everything. That was sort of the successor of the energy of the Richmond Council. I lost contact. Do you remember when Laverne was president?

W: 1970, 1971.

P: Okay. This may have been after that. I don't exactly remember. Anyway, it persisted. It ended up lasting for twenty years. The first few years, the first ten or so, were pretty remarkable because we took stands. After the first year, I fell apart once again, and this fellow named Wayne Young took over as the convener. We called ourselves the convener. They elected a convener, and I was elected the convener. Then the second convener was Wayne Young, and he lasted for almost the whole thing, until the last five years or so. We took stands. Again, we testified before, I think, sometimes General Assembly committees, city council often, and we got into international affairs even, all kinds of things. This was a creation of the Richmond Council on Human Relations. Ora Lomax was there, and Wally Bless. There was a black minister. Ruby Clayton Walker was involved. I have forgotten all of them.

W: Right. But this is clearly a legacy.

P: Yes. Then, we had these annual banquets, and we would get hundreds of people to come to that. In subsequent years, they were covered by the press occasionally. We had Anne Braden speak at one time. We had often Native American dissidents from out West speak once. It was quite a thing. We had [them often at] the Union Theological Seminary. Many of the [big Richmond Human Rights Coalition events] were there and [we always served] food. They had me host a number of them. I did standup comedy, political comedy, believe it or not. I wrote these political jokes, and they kept asking me back to do it. I finally went dry on it.

W: Let's back up a bit before we get to the end of the time here. I want to just ask

you about what experiences you had with the Southern Regional Council itself, how much or how little they played a part in the activities in which you were engaged.

P: Southern Regional Council, we knew they were in the background, especially me because I, by now, had something of an academic involvement. I was writing reports on Prince Edward [County]. Occasionally, I think I even talked on the phone with them, and they were part of the AFSC's activities. I had a little bit better opportunity to see what they were doing, and I was always getting their materials and always promoting their materials.

W: What sort of materials were these?

P: Well, their little pamphlets and stuff. I was also hooked in with Ken Moreland, who wrote many of those pamphlets. They were little studies and so on. I also wanted to work for them. I wanted a job like that, but I didn't want to leave Richmond. This is my home. I had never been away. When I was in Philadelphia, I couldn't be apart from this place. I don't know what it is. I am just too provincial, I guess. I was really alert to what they were doing. From time to time, I read their newsletters and so forth. Many of us who were sort of academically inclined, involved in this, like Ken, we all read the *Southern School News*, the desegregation scorecards and so on, John Egerton [author of *Speak Against the Night*] and so forth. I didn't know him at the time, and he certainly didn't know me. So, we were hooked in a lot of ways.

W: But it was mostly their research activities that you were not exactly dependent on but grateful for when those reports came out.

P: Right. Now, I was deeply involved in an official position with the AFSC. I was put on their Community Relations Committee, that's [for] their domestic programs. Now, I was to be involved occasionally with the links they had with Southern Regional Council. But the big boom for me came in 1969 with Hurricane Camille because I really was closely related to SRC at that point.

W: That is an important project, and we will return to that. I was just wondering if there were any individuals from the SRC who ever really crossed paths with you in Richmond or elsewhere, people like Les Dunbar, even Vernon Jordan.

P: I never met Vernon Jordan during that thing. I think Les Dunbar and some other... I really didn't understand who was executive director and the other roles. It was a big outfit to us because we had a little outfit at 17 East Cary [Street]. I took the Lee's [Happy Lee] over there the other night in the rain and showed them the building, and it is still there. Now, they showed up in the papers of Happy Lee. You could see where Les Dunbar was here and so on, but I never

was directly involved with any of the high figures. Now, I did write them. I think I wrote them for information. I wrote them to test out the job market. Staige Blackford, I wrote him many times about offering him data from my own experience. Staige didn't seem too interested in my stuff. It didn't resonate for some reason. It wasn't addressing things he was working on or something. He came back to Virginia and served in the Holton [Governor] administration, for which he is and ought to be proud, because Holton was a turnaround figure.

W: Let's move on to 1969 now and the events of Hurricane Camille and then the aftermath, the relief program that was organized.

P: It was August of 1969 that the hurricane hit the Mobile, Alabama region, the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and a little bit in Louisiana. The thing went north and went all the way to Hattiesburg in Mississippi. It also picked up and went up north, and it killed over a hundred people on the Gulf Coast. Then it picked up and went across the country and ended up in Nelson County in the mountains of Virginia, which is just the other side of Charlottesville. It came down and started flash flooding and killed something like 125 Virginians up there. It was a bizarre thing. Of course, it was shocking to everybody. I think Williams was the governor and Nixon was the president. We had an Office of Emergency Preparedness in those days, and we had a Red Cross. We had a HUD [Housing and Urban Development]. We had a Salvation Army and many other agencies, nonprofit and federal and state, which were still segregated. In August, just moments after that, who would have been executive director at SRC?

W: 1969? It might have still been Paul Anthony.

P: Paul Anthony and Barbara Moffett at AFSC, my guess is they talked and they said, we got to do something. They were used to talking all the time from the time of the 1950s when they anticipated school closings all across [the South]. They had been talking. Barbara Moffett was still the AFSC head of community relations, and maybe you met Joyce Miller, who was at our meeting the other night. She is the successor. So, suddenly one day, they said, Ed, how would you like to do some interviewing? I don't remember the date I went there, but we assembled a team. Ed Nakawatase was out of the office up there. He was a new guy on staff at AFSC. They had a couple of people snooping around from Alabama and Mississippi to see what was up, and they had seen quite enough evidence that there was discrimination in every single aspect of recovery for people. It was race, class and gender. The [federal, state, and local governments all] favored the businesses, and they favored the physical side of recovery, the physical losses. The bigger your loss, the more you were getting. Through great insight, [the AFSC and SRC] designed – it must have been Paul Anthony and Barbara Moffett with their staffs – the most remarkable plan I have ever seen to attack a thing like this.

W: What was the structure?

P: They said, we will get a team of six people to do interviewing. They will find out what is going on, get the stories from on the ground, and we are going to put this guy – his name slips my mind, but the record is down in the VCU library – in Washington, a lawyer. We will feed him that information, and AFSC and SRC will use their contacts to emphasize each of the stories. We will use our media departments to get it out to the press. They said, okay, Ed, take this team down. They said, do you have anybody you can take with you? And I found my two best students, the two most motivated. One was a black guy from Petersburg, and the other was an Appalachian white. Both were very committed to these things. And Ed Nakawatase. Then the two other people did independent interviewing, and I think they stopped shortly after we went down there.

I can't remember how many weeks we stayed, but we went down and we began to interview. We found our subjects anywhere we could and began to document all the different realms in which this discrimination was occurring and discovered stories. Along the way, I said, you know what, these people could speak eloquently to the press themselves. Why don't we build a list of people who would go on TV and tell the story themselves. So, we fed those names. I remember I would answer to Eleanor Eaton, who is dead now, at AFSC, and the stuff would all end up with [our spokesman in D.C.]. The guy's name is at the top of my head. He would go knocking on the door of each agency one by one [like] HUD. He went over to American Red Cross and nailed them, [and took] these stories. And they were on the run, daily. Every day, I had a new story for him. Before long, the spokespersons whom we were identifying began to talk on national TV, every night. Even after I left Mississippi and came home, I'd put on the TV, and there were the guys we would urge [to speak out]. We had to find out if they were willing to risk it because it was dangerous.

W: They were telling the stories of their experiences.

P: Yes, and also their observations. See, some were NAACP leaders. Discrimination on the basis of class, some women would fill their houses with furniture because they had a lot of furniture when they started. A woman who was a beautician lost all her equipment and uniforms, and they wouldn't want to replace that because it wasn't worth much. So, she couldn't go back to work. They were going to build the hotels up. They said, we got a grand idea of making [over] this the Mississippi River area and so forth. All the emphasis was on business and to heck with these poor folks, the average guys. Then the middle class itself was devastated. They lost not only their property, but they lost their identity. Everything they owned was wiped out, and they were disoriented. There was a psychological side to this. I had been studying disasters. I knew about the social psychology of it. I was a behavioral scientist, and I brought this to light. I

wrote about it a little bit, and I told the press about it and so forth.

W: Were there tangible effects apart from stirring a lot opinion.

P: Oh, yes. Little by little, each agency. HUD started getting the trailers down there quicker, and [our] guy in Washington was nailing them down. They had some interstate transport problems, even. For example, some states wouldn't let you bring those trailers. It was some kind of state law that would not let you transport the trailer because of this and that and the other. I did not have to worry about that. Things just started showing up. The Red Cross one day started taking blankets and food to a neighborhood that it drove right on by before. Before long, things were booming. Nixon was on the defense, Governor John Bell Williams was on the defense, and the people who had been silent on this were off of the fence. It was the most remarkable thing. I said, good grief, this is action research of the best sort.

Finally, we left the site. We had a big discussion about me leaving to go work on a report and leaving my people in the field because we had a lot of threats. I had a cop stick his gun in my ear. Ed Nakawatase and I were together that night, and Ed doesn't even remember this. Good grief, I was terrified, and he doesn't even remember it. We finally left. The other guys went home, gave me their many reports. I was holed up in a AFL-CIO hotel on Sixteenth Street [in Washington]. They were in on it. SRC supported it financially, and AFSC did. I got up there, and I wrote this report.

W: Where did you go to write the report? Where was the hotel?

P: On Sixteenth Street in D. C. I think it was the AFL-CIO hotel up there. I had never seen such a place. It was a big suite, and I was decked out on the floor, and I just wrote and wrote and wrote. They had a typist for me, and it was an incredible experience for me. They would not let my family come see me. I was dying to see my children and my wife. But I got something in. It wasn't a great draft. The draft is down there in the archives at VCU. Then they took the draft at AFSC. I don't know what SRC did with it on their part. But AFSC, for their part, took it and wrote like a thirty-page summary of it and got debriefings from me and everybody else who was involved. Then there was a campaign to change the disaster relief laws. The new agency we have today was a result of that, ultimately. The hearings were held, and the AFSC testified. [Louis] Schneider and Barbara Moffett went. I even caught the senator from Indiana [Birch Baye] who was responsible for a [Congressional] committee. I caught him here [in Richmond] and went behind the stage at the Mosque when he was appearing here and gave him a little briefing. I was at the end of my work. I appeared on *The Today Show* with a fellow who was well-known. He was on *20/20* later. He is gone now, but he is still alive. They gave me seven minutes to tell that whole

story, and it was a disaster. It was my first time on national TV, so it was kind of intimidating to me. But it was also the first time anybody had ever seen the name of Virginia Commonwealth University before, because it was only one year old.

W: Right, and it was this amalgam of, I guess, RPI and...

P: Yes, and the Medical College of Virginia. After that, I got tons of mail. The people in the military said we ought to organize them into little [military] districts. I got incredible recommendations and some criticism. Some of the NGOs like Red Cross were real hostile.

W: Had they just pretty much bowed to the whims of local pressures?

P: Yes, and there was no desegregation. A year [or so] later, I went to the first conference on black health in America at one of the black medical schools in Nashville.

W: Meharry?

P: Yes, Meharry. I met a black guy standing there. This was like a year or more later. He had his name in black on his lapel, and it said "American Red Cross Director of Minority Affairs." I said, when did this happen? He said, they came and recruited me such and such a date, and that was perhaps a result of that and subsequent campaigning. And the disaster relief law we had after that also began to introduce psychological counseling and change the requirements for replacement. You could not just replace something. Because you had a \$10,000 living room suite, you [may not] get a \$10,000 [replacement]. The SBA had to change. They had to give small business the same advantages. Several other emphases were reflected in the law, and they were studied for a long time, for a year or two. In the 1970s, we got a new way to look at it, and I have to thank the brilliant leadership of those two agencies, SRC and AFSC, and their knowledge about how to use talent, such as the little narrow range of talent I had to offer and all the other people. Barney Sellers was the lawyer. He sold a new vision of disaster relief.

[End of Side B1]

W: ...perhaps towards some sort of concluding comments about the nature of the human relations councils, both at the micro level, at the Richmond level, then thinking about statewide and then thinking perhaps in my world, the Southern Regional Council. How would you characterize the contribution that those sorts of organizations made to the struggle for human rights and civil rights in the South? Start with the local.

P: You know, I also recruited campers for the Encampment for Citizenship for nearly forty years, and that took me to Councils on Human Relations in Alabama and South Carolina and elsewhere, so I had a little bit of an opportunity to see some of the issues they took up and so on. A lot of them successfully, in my view, including the ones in Virginia – I am thinking particularly of the Lynchburg chapter and the Richmond/Petersburg chapter and the Northern Virginia chapter especially – were great at changing the discussion, the assumptions, the premises that appear in public discussions about desegregation. I thought that was wonderful. They gave support and sustenance to people who would otherwise have to work alone. A local chapter, the fact that it wasn't just this state organization, meant that I am doing something that I have solidarity with other people and give them confidence.

W: One of the phrases you used earlier which other people have used is that it was sort of like a sense of family.

P: Family, exactly, and we all became friends and had confidence. But the big problem during desegregation was the sense of isolation. You could not just connect with a national organization. You could not just connect with a state organization. You had to have some kind of local thing that was part of your immediate family. I think that is what they did. They were able to get in the paper a lot. There were letters and so on. Sometimes editorials would criticize them. For example, in Lynchburg, the owner of a Lane cedar chest company – you know the Lane furniture manufacturer out there in western Virginia – he hated the Virginia Council. He called them Communists, and he called Ken Morland a Communist. He said the Lynchburg chapter was subverting our democracy. He was trying to intimidate them [with his] newspaper, rebuke them over and over them, you know, daily threats. Ken Morland and that chapter there fought back, and they finally silenced this guy and made him look outrageous in the light of other segregationists. There is a nice little tale told in my interviews with [Morland] about an example from this episode.

A lot of media things happened in those days. Then in later years, they moved onto to concrete programming in which, for example, Hilda Warden wrote a proposal. I think she wrote the proposal for Offender Aid and Restoration under the auspices of the local chapter on human relations. So, they went on to programs in it. When the new era came, they either started a new organization that encompassed the new needs or they developed programs which met very specific needs like OAR.

W: Right. Of course, Jay Worrall was instrumental in setting that up, as well.

P: Yes. It became a very important thing. As for the state, I think it did a lot to articulate the chapters. If there had not been a state organization, we had twenty-

two chapters or whatever, they would have felt weak. There would have been a different kind of isolation. They would have said, there is no connection, there is no movement here. But with a state office, you could say, oh, I am going down to the state office, and I am going to see what they are doing. Happy Lee would come out to Danville or he would go up to northern Virginia or he would go down to Tidewater. He would say, you are on target. We are together. There are hundreds and hundreds of people elsewhere in the state who are with you, and you are not alone. You need not fear.

W: Before we move on, I want to give you a little opportunity to put some flesh on the bones on the figure of Happy Lee. How would you describe him?

P: Remarkable character. Character with a capital "C" and a capital "R" and capitals all the way in the middle. He was born as a tenant farm boy, no electricity, no nothing, in a fundamentalist, highly white supremacist family. Got married and started his life and discovered that fundamentalism wasn't the way to go and that white supremacy was a fraud. He broke out of that and became very committed to making things right. He became a minister, and he came to Richmond after serving in a church in Springfield, Virginia. He came to be the executive director. He must have been in his forties or something like that. He had a talent of schmoozing people. It was unbelievable. You heard him speak the other night. Well, he could do that all night. Stories of north Georgia just enchanted people. He was bright, and he could link people who weren't always compatible, didn't seem to be compatible. But he would find ways to link them and get them hugging each other somehow, at least figuratively. He also could confront authority in a way that was less threatening than the average. He wasn't terribly for demonstrating and so on. He was sort of conservative, like many of the other Virginia Council leadership, like Aubrey Brown. Aubrey Brown would get a frown on his face when he heard the youth wanted to picket, but Happy Lee would find a funny thing to say about it, and he'd leave the message with you, now, is this really the most effective thing under these particular circumstances.

W: So, he would make you reconsider your strategies, and sometimes you would go ahead and sometimes you wouldn't.

P: Yes, right. That was kind of a remarkable thing. He also had a way of getting us to work for next to nothing. I did projects for him. I think he had me go down and check out what was happening in Danville [Virginia]. He wanted me to go down there and get hit in the head with those axe handles the cops were wielding around there. They missed my head. In those days, I did not have a swollen head. But he went down there, and I always told him he never paid me more than 29 cents an hour, and he said that was more than he was getting paid.

But he could get you committed, and he could make it seem important. Many

times in social change, when you are working for justice, you don't know what is important, and you need somebody outside of you to say, you know, that is important, that is a moral imperative, that is a historical event. You need somebody to certify that action as worthy of memory even. He was able to do that kind of thing for people, and it drove people to say, then I have got to do more. He would energize people in that sense, and he could get commitment out of people, and he would turn people on. I remember how he turned on Henry Caravati. Henry Caravati was a businessman, a prominent name in town because I think his brother or cousin was a famous physician here. He was at the Medical College of Virginia. They also had a junkyard over here in south Richmond where everybody got their italianate and other beautiful things that go on these townhouses and so on. [Happy Lee] turned that man on, and that man went out and broke barriers in employment with some kind of confidence. He became an interim executive director at one time after Happy left, I think. So, he could get powerful people to commit to him. It was the same magic he used on the owner of the Richmond Virginians, the International League [baseball], and the same thing he did with restauranteurs. He and Rupert Picott together negotiated, I think, the desegregation of thirty-five restaurants in just a few weeks. He got them thinking, well, you are going to do it, you will do it, you will do it, then maybe I will do it.

W: Sounds very inspirational but also strategically very shrewd.

P: Yes. He had an enormous ego. It was way up there. It was so big up there, and he wanted to be center stage. There could be no two-bit standup comics like myself on stage with him. He [even] upstaged Doug Wilder [Governor of Virginia, Dem.]. We once tried to get a *Washington Post* edition for central Virginia. I remember Doug Wilder in that meeting and I remember Happy Lee in that meeting over on 17 [E. Cary Street]. The *Post* said it just wasn't practical. Plus, they printed their paper on the presses of the *Richmond Times Dispatch* media general, I am told. Don Baker tells me. He worked for the *Post*. And they were not going to disturb the owners of the Richmond paper, so they said no to us. But we were desperate for a newspaper because the news was distorted in those days. Happy fought with them, too, but he broke through and was able to do TV. He would do these minute appearances on local TV and radio, and we had never had any luck like that.

W: Presumably, the radio stations were pretty _____.

P: Oh, hard. Yes, WRVA was the leading station here at 50,000 watts, and he had all kind of breakthroughs there. So, I see 1961 through 1964 and his presence here was a convergence of the most incredible. It was an incredible accident of time and person and history.

W: Sure. You have reminded me by mentioning radio somebody I wanted to ask you about, a sort of maverick who wouldn't, I guess, have been a member of any of these organizations. Howard Carwile, who actually did get on WRVA in the late 1960s, 1967 through 1979.

P: He had a Sunday afternoon program during the Kennedy election.

W: Right, in which case he was on radio earlier because he was on two or three nights a week on WRVA after 1967.

P: Oh, he was? Yes, that is from your book. I have got to see that book. Howard Carwile, yes. I knew him.

W: Tell me about him. He doesn't seem to fit any mold.

P: Yes. He was born in Charlotte County, and he grew up there. He had a combination of deep Southside [Virginia] accent. We used to have this Southside accent that was very distinctive. It has a little Elizabethan English left in it, but there are also a lot of [unique] sounds [at] the front end and the back end, and these words kind of get lost [from their proper spelling]. Also, the ou's really come out strong. We always talk about going "ute and a-boot the hoos" [with accent], and it is not "the hoos," it is "da hoos." Very much like in Louisiana that you can hear kind of a Brooklynese, we had one here in Southside. Well, he [Carwile] had that accent. Then he [also] had something different about his speech as an individual, developmental kind of speech difference, I will call it. He was raised on a tenant farm, very poor, and he went on to be more ambitious. He came to the city, and he wanted to be a lawyer, apparently. He went to some kind of school called Southeastern University at the YMCA up in D. C. I am sure I have gotten the things wrong, but it was not anything we know today, and he said he went to law school there. He either read for the bar or he got a law degree there. I am not sure. But he did practice law, and he passed the bar. He grew to defend blacks exclusively, and he was beloved. He was the funniest guy. I loved to [see him when I would] go to court [and] when I went to city council. He was once on city council. He ran seventeen times, I think. Did you find that?

W: He was elected three times, at least.

P: I actually supported him in those [times] here, and I talked to him. He wrote a book called *Speaking From Byrdland*. The book was great. It was an anti-Byrd thing. But I got my first discomfort [from him] when Kennedy [ran for President]. The Kennedy election came on, and I used to always listen to [Carwile's radio] broadcasts.

W: And this was on WXGI?

- P: On WXGI. Did you find anything on WXGI in your [research]? He had these fifteen-minute programs, I loved what he would say. He was always against the establishment, always ragging on Harry Byrd, which we were desperate for. I confronted Byrd a couple times on the telephone myself, but mostly you could not get to him. Howard Carwile began subtly one day to talk about [how] the Pope was going to run our government if Kennedy was elected, and that began to disturb me. But he kept on [with] his pro-black [talk], and he defended blacks. He did *pro bono* [work for blacks] for a few years until desegregation occurred and then the busing began.
- W: So, he supported the Crusade for Voters and all those things...
- P: Oh, yes.
- W: ...but then he was vehemently against busing.
- P: Yes. Well, he just sort of changed. Suddenly, something happened. When the busing thing came on, he seemed to appeal to the whites who wanted to escape their responsibility [for] white-skin privilege. He became totally identified with that. He led a campaign there. Even people who were middle class who [earlier had been] embarrassed by being around him because of the way he spoke and his old countrified manner and so forth, they allowed him to be a spokesman in some ways, and he totally lost all his credibility with the blacks and others.
- W: Even though at this time, ironically, he is still supporting black political rights. He is supporting William Ferguson Reid and he is supporting Henry Marsh. All of that side is just the busing issue.
- P: **[In a draft of the original transcript, Mr. Peeples added the following note, "I believe that I misspoke here. I believe that once Carwile began his anti-busing campaign that he began to drop most of the black causes until we began to see him as being on the other side of most racial justice issues.]** I guess you are right. I guess it made us turn away from even knowing what he was doing any further. I mean, I discounted him at that point and no longer saw him as a hero. So, I guess I didn't even read anything about him because I didn't choose to, which perhaps is unfair. But we were in a struggle with our city schools surviving, and by that time, I had three children in the schools and my kids were struggling themselves.
- W: Did the folks in the Richmond Council on Human Relations take a formal stance on busing?
- P: I think it was just tacit approval, but I don't remember any official statement. Now,

I had spotty connections [with RCHR at this point]. It wasn't like I was always going to their meetings. I was distracted in 1969 and 1970 by the work in the university and also Hurricane Camille, the reform of disaster [relief]. I had a job, and [later] I was distracted by my divorce and other things, and my dissertation. So, I had nine years of teaching experience before I got my dissertation done. It was a monster, and it was [an] atypical [project].

W: Okay. Let's see if we can find any nice concluding comments to make. I think you summed up very well the sorts of roles that the various levels in the Human Relations Council hierarchies played, and I can see how that is very important in preparing the ground for other things, of creating the sense of family and of solidarity. Do you ever think about what having white liberals like yourself doing these sorts of things, what impact that might have had on African-Americans?

P: Well, I think some of them got the impression, the correct impression, that we needed friends, and many of them provided friendship. I mean, adoring friendship with each other. Ruby Clayton Walker and I, I mean, I am brokenhearted about her illness and so forth. They reached out and welcomed [us], and they kind of sensed that we were alone, and it wasn't explicit. That is one thing I think they reacted to. Other blacks were busy testing you. Every era, they would forget where you were and what you did the four years before, and so you had to pass a new test about yourself, whether you were genuine or not. I was deeply involved in race developments and improvement, and I helped start the Afro-American Studies program at VCU, and I wrote much of the early curriculum and designed courses, interdisciplinary behavioral science courses, and I was on the [AAS] committee. [Critics] told me that there was no literature for Afro-American Studies, so just in the social and behavioral sciences, I created in just a few days a forty-three-page bibliography to show them what was out there. I had to sell [our VCU] all-white curriculum committees on the legitimacy of it.

The black students began to see me as a friend. Also, I recruited black kids, and I tried to help them survive. I had been a poor student myself, so I knew the pitfalls. So, I would reach out and I would try to identify talent in a special way. I would write letters of support when I saw them failing on one count, but I could detect native intelligence on the other. That built a reputation for me, and I think I have created kind of a nice reputation that I am sort of proud of in [this] town. Most people do not tell me, but I sense [a] kind of a warmth.

Henry Marsh for the first time told me the other night that, "you have been an unsung hero." That, coming from Henry Marsh, has got to be one of the greatest honors I have enjoyed. Once, Oliver Hill wrote me a letter along those lines, too. I can't think of two men I admire more, and I have worked with Henry on a variety of things. Even as late as the [80s], we worked on desegregating some rental

property and so on. I went down as an expert witness. I had begun expert witness efforts showing how stress from injustice can cause problems in a person's health and documenting that. I have written a chapter on how to do it, and Henry took advantage of that. We went down and intimidated a law firm on Main Street together, and we were able to desegregate this housing. As far as liberals go, [black] views of white liberals were, I think, pretty favorable, except that white liberals weren't always white liberals. I mean, there is a kind of a temporariness to some white liberals. They worked [in civil rights] for a while, and then they go back off and go back to white privilege and the circle they are used to and say they have done their part and so forth. Then some other people live in [the civil rights struggle] for a lifetime.

W: Are in it for the long haul.

P: For a lifetime. It is a way of life. It is not just, I am going to be a '60s person, and when the '70s come, I am going to be a broker on Wall Street.

W: Alright. That is a good way to end. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

P: Yes. That was terrific.

[End of Interview.]